

I appreciate the opportunity to speak before this committee. I am Al Burch, Executive Director of the Alaska Dragger's Association located in Kodiak, Alaska.

Most of the boats I represent including my own two trawlers, the Dawn and Dusk are less than 100' and are owned by Kodiak residents. I have been a fisherman since 1959 and owned or co-owned all the vessels I have been on. I have survived many catastrophes during these 41 years, the collapse of the king and tanner crab, shrimp, the 1964 earthquake, the sea lion closures of 1992, the roe stripping vessel raid of 1989, and market problems that affected canneries and boats alike.

During this time we always had a new fishery to develop so we survived. We are now legislated into smaller and smaller areas of opportunity. We can no longer diversify.

With the collapse of the crab, shrimp in the late 70's Senator Stevens introduced legislation in both 1978 and 1979 to help Alaskans to Americanize the bottom fisheries.

I would like to quote from the Kodiak Times of February 1, 1979 - his introduction of the bill "The development of the bottom industry has been one of my highest priorities, and the enactment of the 200 mile limit which I co-sponsored with Senator Magnuson laid the foundation. Alaskans must now build a bottom fish fleet and the legislation introduced will help that development by substantially reducing the cost of loans to Alaskan fishermen".

A number of us seized the opportunity and converted our vessels. In a very short time we did Americanize the fisheries. The Gulf of Alaska communities lead this effort with help of grants from the Salton-Stall Kennedy funds through Alaska Fisheries Development Foundation. These grants created the first full production shore-based surimi plant at the Alaska Pacific Seafoods in Kodiak. It also supported the development of the cod fish fisheries with the development of a cod and pollock fillet plant with Trident Fisheries in Akutan. Then we concentrated on protecting fish.

A status of stock document is presented every year. The Council very conservatively created the quota for each species. The Pollock in the Gulf has gone from 400,000mt in the early 80's down to around 90,000mt for 2000. The Cod in the Gulf went from 81,000mt down to 58,715mt. With the co-operation of the canneries we are developing a flat fish and pacific ocean perch fishery. But with the tremendous increase of the halibut biomass and a fixed by-catch cap, we are only allowed to catch a very small percent of the quota.

We offered 10% of the gray cod for a small boat fishery to take place inside the States 3 mile zone, the State took 25%.

The draconian sea lion restrictions of 1999 & 2000 have pushed us further off shore (very dangerous for our smaller trawlers) forcing us into areas of potential higher by-catch. Shorter seasons and rougher weather, we are forced into a disastrous race for fish. An influx of boats from the Bering Sea is also shortening our season. This means less work for our resident cannery workers and less income flowing through town. With short openings, cannery workers leave town. New people must be trained each opening, costs go up and recovery goes down.

Forming co-ops will allow fuller compliance with the intent of Improved Retention & Improved Utilization. They would also limit the number of plants and boats. This would give us a known situation to work with. The vessels and plants are already over capitalized. More plants would mean more boats, therefore shortening our limited season and income even more.

I want to thank Senator Stevens for his help in providing \$5,000,000 for sea lion research in the year 2000. Beyond 2000 we need to continue the research on availability and use of prey by stellar sea lions in the Kodiak area.

Wynne, Norcross, Hills, and Buck are the principal investigators. To make this research meaningful, we need National Marine Fisheries Service to open Barnabus and Gull Point as outlined in the University of Alaska research plan.

This program was only funded at a reduced level for 1 year. We need multi year funding in the future. This research is critical to the long-term survival of Kodiak, Sandpoint, Seward, Cordova and other Gulf communities.